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ANNIVERSARY

A Life in The Museum: An Homage to Dr. Dumitru Murariu at 80 Years

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Short biography

Dr. Dumitru Murariu was born on September 21, 1940 in Ungureni, Botoşani County, as the first child in a peasant family. He attended primary and secondary school in his home village. Since the beginning he proved himself to be one of the brightest students in the class and, as a consequence, the school teachers advised his parents to have him continue his education. At the end of secondary school, the young Dumitru Murariu enrolled at the "August Treboniu Laurian" theoretical

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PENSOFT

high school in the city of Botoşani. During these years (1955–1957), the teacher of "the Fundamentals of Darwinism" made a strong impression on the future scientist, with practical lessons, in a small garden, on the correlation between the natural selection and the variability of organisms. On the way from the main building to the above-mentioned garden, the professor taught his pupils how to identify the trees on the sidewalks and from the "Public Garden". This teacher's name was Remus Cehovschi - former Assistant Professor at the University of Chernivtsi (Cernăuți – North Bukovina), from where he took refuge to Botoșani in 1944.

After graduating high school, Dumitru Murariu returned to his home village, where he occupied a position of unqualified teacher in the village school. In the fall of 1958, he was drafted for the mandatory military service until mid-January 1961. Returning home, he resumed his school position but in the autumn of the same year, he successfully passed the admission exams at the Faculty of Biology-Geography, the Department of Biology-Zoology at the "Al. I. Cuza" University of Iași. Based on his academic excellence he received a scholarship until graduating in 1966.

Professional activity

After graduation the young Dumitru Murariu moved to Bucharest and in the autumn of 1966, he joined the TB laboratory of the "Pantelimon Hospital" where he worked as a biologist-bacteriologist. Aside from his routine activity (laboratory testing) he was involved in a first scientific research project, developed in collaboration with scientists from the "Dr. I. Cantacuzino" Institute. The topic of this first scientific project was *Experimental infestations with Koch's bacillus in various species of small mammals* and the results were communicated in the scientific conferences of the Society of Medical Sciences in Bucharest, while one research article was published in the journal "Phthisiology" (1968).

In 1969, Dumitru Murariu successfully applied for a position in the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History in Bucharest, where he was hired as a museum guide for the beginning. As an enthusiastic new member of the staff, he was actively engaged in educational activities, delivering guided tours in the museum, scientific popularization lectures, teaching biology classes, for secondary and primary school students, as well as for university students in biology, human and veterinary medicine, zootechny, agronomy and forestry. Dumitru Murariu was also involved in organizing temporary exhibitions and updating the permanent exhibition, by drafting explanatory texts, drawing distribution maps of various animal species on display, replacing obsolete labels or updating texts, etc.

He acted as the curator of the Mammals scientific collection of the museum, being involved in the development, organization and scientific research of that collection. Almost from the beginning (1969) he started an intense field activity, collecting, identifying and preserving various specimens, his main focus being insectivorous mammals, like hedgehogs, moles, and shrews. Given his background in microscopy (acquired while working in the medical laboratory) he developed in

the museum a histology laboratory and approached a new research topic, namely "Histological and histochemical study of the skin glands of insectivorous mammals". His keen work on this theme allowed him to obtain quick results, and in the first year after joining the museum, at the 1969 scientific session organized by the museum, he was able to present his scientific results entitled "Contributions to the knowledge of the glandular skin system from *Sorex araneus* and *Talpa europaea*". The work was also published in the scientific journal Travaux du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", vol.XI/1970. In 1970 he took an exam which allowed him to occupy a museum curator position.

Pursuing various directions within his chosen scientific topic, Dumitru Murariu developed a deeper and deeper understanding of the importance of the skin glands in the biology, ecology and evolution of mammals. He untangled the connection between these specialized glandular structures and the evolutionary complexity reached by some living species, the role of the skin glands in the mechanisms of thermo-regulation of the body, as a way to eliminate catabolic products, and especially as producers of secretions with an active role in the communication between congeners, and/or as a repellent against predators. These last signaling roles of the skin glands were topics of permanent interest for Dumitru Murariu who has identified ten such types of specialized skin glands, located in different regions of the body. They are characterized by highly developed structures (at least during the breeding season) and produce secretions with specific composition and odor (important signals in communication between animals), with either attractant or repellent effects. He explained aspects of the intra- and interspecific relations in the group of insectivorous mammals (territory marking and same species individual recognizing, especially during the reproduction periods) by revealing the role of the lateral skin glands in shrews or the anal glands in hedgehogs and moles. There is a close correlation between the level of development of the specialized skin glands (e.g., the lateral ones) and the breeding season for each species, as the same glands can have, through their secretions, a defensive role. He also reported field observations where some of these animals, because of their repellent smell, escaped predation from subadult carnivores (foxes, badgers, weasels, stoats, but also cats and dogs).

In 1971, Dumitru Murariu enrolled as a Ph.D. student at the "Comparative Anatomy" Department of the Faculty of Biology in the University of Bucharest with the thesis *The skin glands of insectivores* (*Mammalia*) *in Romania. Anatomy, histology and histochemistry*. His scientific supervisor was Prof. Emeritus, Dr. Gheorghe T. Dornescu. He defended his thesis on July 11, 1975. During his PhD program he had published eight papers directly related to the subject of the doctoral thesis, as well as other faunistic and systematic papers.

In 1971, he again took an exam to occupy a senior museum curator position. This allowed him to focus more on his scientific research activities.

Between September 1975 and September 1976 dr. Dumitru Murariu was a Fulbright visiting scholar in the USA and during this time he continued to work on

his main research topic, but also took a special interest in how museums are organized. For this he visited the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. (at the Smithsonian Institution), the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburg, the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago and the Lawrence Museum of Natural History at the Kansas State University. His USA visiting program concluded with the work *Histology and histochemistry of specialized skin glands in eight species of North American shrews* (in collaboration with two specialists from the host institutions). During his time in USA, he also visited a number of other natural history museums, biological research stations, natural reservations and zoos, such as The Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, Columbia University Museum, Boulder Museum, Colorado, Salt Lake City Museum, museums in Berkeley, Los Angeles and San Diego, the Lubbock City Museum, Texas, the Phoenix Museum. This intense program allowed him to establish a veritable scientific network with scholars in the mammalogy field, but also to train in various museum activities, such as the techniques used for display and restoration of natural history specimens, modern approaches in the public activity of museums, and general management of scientific and cultural institutions in general, of those of biological sciences in particular, as they were practiced at that time in the USA.

After his return home, in 1976, dr. Dumitru Murariu was appointed as head of the Vertebrates Department in the museum. Since then, the main research topic of dr. Dumitru Murariu shifted from comparative anatomy to biology systematics and he became the main scholar in Romania to study mammalian taxonomy. From a biogeographic point of view, at the beginning his work addressed the fauna from the Danube Delta, and was extended to the Romanian (Danube) Plain, from the Borcea Arm to Drobeta-Turnu Severin, then to the Southern Carpathian Mountains (Bucegi, Piatra Craiului, Făgăraș), the Western Carpathians (Zarandului and Metaliferi Mountains) and Eastern Carpathians (Maramureș, Rarău, Vrancei, Buzăului, Ciucaș, Muntele Roșu etc.).

His taxonomic work on different species of small mammals was also conducted in collaboration projects with different universities and/or scientific research institutes. Thus, he was able to use a cytotaxonomic approach to demonstrate the presence of the newly described species *Microtus rossiaemeridionalis* in the Romanian fauna. Other species he focussed on were *Microtus arvalis*, *M. nivalis*, *M. tatricus* (a European endemic), *Micromys minutus*, *Eliomys quercinus*, *Sicista betulina*. He reported the last species, a particularly rare one, based on a specimen collected from the Pietrosul Rodnei Biosphere Reserve. Today the specimen is on display in the permanent exhibition of the "Grigore Antipa" Museum. In 1998, using a cytogenetic approach, dr. Dumitru Murariu confirmed the presence in Romania of the species *Erinaceus concolor* - the eastern hedgehog and not *E. europaeus*, as erroneously reported until then. These findings were presented at the Euro-American Mammal Congress, in Santiago de Compostela - Spain, 1998. A particular long-time research project concerned the winter-feeding behavior of birds of prey. This was done by

analyzing the content of over 15,000 pellets, over a 5 years period, from the same area (Oltenia Plain), as well as over another ten years on materials collected from Bacău, Iași, Teleorman and Ilfov counties as well as from Bucharest. Thus, he had the opportunity to compare the food components of several owl species in each season, to compare the feeding behavior in urban vs. rural localities, and in natural ecosystems vs. agricultural land.

Dr. Dumitru Murariu has also worked on small mammal species outside Romania, starting with field trips during his Fullbright Visiting Scholar Program in North America. He continued to study mammals from regions in the Indonesian Archipelago, South America, in Africa - Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, as well as in Turkey. The collected specimens have been used for research and publishing, as well as for the production of three temporary exhibitions in the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History.

Organizer of scientific expeditions

In 1991 and 1994 dr. Dumitru Murariu organized two seven months scientific expeditions of the "Grigore Antipa" Museum in Indonesia and Brazil, respectively, with teams of 4–6 Romanian scientists. Extremely valuable specimens have been collected, which allowed the description of 40 new species (Travaux du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", vol. 38) and the addition of type specimens to the collections of the Bucharest museum. Some of the remarkable achievements of these expeditions refer to the collecting and exhibiting in the museum of several specimens of the tree shrew genus *Tupaia*, that connects insectivorous mammals and primates; collecting and displaying in the museum exhibition the primitive primate species *Tarsius* sp.; collecting several thousand mollusks (gastropods, bivalves and cephalopods), sponges and corals, fishes, amphibians, reptiles and birds; collecting over 200 specimens of frugivorous bats, as well as representative species from several orders of insects (Diptera, Coleoptera, Hymenoptera, Orthoptera, Lepidoptera).

Museum studies

Dr. Dumitru Murariu was also actively involved in museum studies. During his career he was invited by the Museums of Zoology in Moscow and Sankt Petersburg, but also to museums and/or museum events in Berlin, Budapest and Vienna. In Austria, he participated (as the only Romanian guest) at the Conference on *New Paths in Museum Policy in Central Europe*, actively contributing to the work of the Commission of Museums of Natural Sciences, by elaborating on the role of scientific research in museums in general and particularly in the natural science museums. The meeting emphasized the correlation between the research in museums and the museum education, as well as on issues regarding the scientific staff of the museums (the critical problem of the small number of specialists in museums and their

fluctuation, the optimal using of human potential and the hiring staff with skills for scientific research in museums), the connection of museums with university education and research institutes, the international importance of ensuring the optimal conditions for the maintenance of the museum collections.

Between 1986 and 2008, dr. Dumitru Murariu was an invited lecturer for museum curator qualification courses held at the Training Center of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. His lectures addressed general museum issues, new restoration techniques and taxidermy, collections management, the place and role of scientific research in museums. He planned practical field applications (e.g., in the Călimani Mountains, in the Danube Delta - in Caraorman and Sfiştofca), during which he explained the collecting methods of zoological material and preliminary conservation techniques. Dr. Dumitru Murariu also organized and coordinated research stages for the students in museum studies (verification of species identifications, comparison of data with literature, drafting the text to publish the results).

PhD supervisor

Since 2000, dr. Dumitru Murariu has been an Associated Professor at the Faculty of Biology - University of Bucharest where he still works as a PhD studies supervisor in the field of Biology. During this time, he mentored 23 PhD students, 17 of which have defended their theses. His PhD students in mammal biology were recruited from different university centers, thus allowing dr. Dumitru Murariu to truly create a school of mammalogy in Romania.

Publishing activity

During his long career, dr. Dumitru Murariu published alone or in collaboration more than 340 works on zoology, museum studies, history of science and popularization of science (see a complete list at the end of the article) and attended 23 International Congresses and Conferences.

It is also worth mentioning here some of his seminal works on the Romanian mammal fauna. Between 1988 and 2012 he published a six-volume collection, entitled *The life of mammals* (volume 1 and 2 on "Terrestrial mammals", volume 3 on "Arboreal mammals", volume 4 on "Burrowing mammals", volume 5 on "Flying mammals" and volume 6 on "Aquatic mammals"). This was the first synthesis in the country, with the presentation of mammals in ecological groups.

He also published four monographs in the Romanian Fauna Series, volume XVI *Mammalia*: *Insectivora* in 2000, *Rodentia* (in collaboration) in 2001, *Lagomorpha*, *Cetacea*, *Artiodactyla* and *Perissodactyla (without current species)* in 2004, and in 2005 *Carnivora*. Dr. Dumitru Murariu also published updated translations of the volumes on *Insectivora* (in 2004) and *Chiroptera* (in 2016) in the same Romanian Fauna Series of monographs.

In 2003, dr. Dumitru Murariu co-authored another monograph on the *Chiropterans from Romania,* published by the "Emil Racoviță" Institute of Speleology of the Romanian Academy and by the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History. In 2008 he published (in collaboration) *Bibliographia Mammalogica Romaniae*, a synthesis covering more than 4,500 published papers on the bats in the Romanian fauna. In 2016, dr. Dumitru Murariu published at the Omni Scriptum Publishing House in Germany, the book *Les pinnipedes antarctiques. Research by Émile Racovitza*. Finally, it is worth mentioning that results of his research activity were included in the monograph work *Mammal Species of the World* by Wilson et al. (1993, pp. 755 and 935). In the same global synthesis are recorded (on pages 767 and 935) the results of dr. Dumitru Murariu personal and collaborative research on the *Microtus rossiaemeridionalis*, *Apodemus agrarius* mouse species and the dormouse *Eliomys quercinus*. As of December 2020, there are more than 950 citations of the works of dr. Dumitru Murariu recorded in Google Scholar.

Management of research

When dr. Dumitru Murariu was appointed as head of the Vertebrates Department in the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History in 1976, he was able to prove his manager skills which led to a better organization of the vertebrate research team, to a better planning of the department activities with annual, biannual and quarterly programs, with appropriate analyses and reports. Between 1988 and 2014 he was the general director of the "Grigore Antipa" Museum. Between 01.04.2015–30.06.2016, he held the position of deputy director at the "Emil Racoviță" Institute of Speleology, and from 2016 he acts as the director of the Institute of Biology of the Romanian Academy.

Dr. Dumitru Murariu was involved in 23 research projects, in 12 of them as project manager. He worked in projects leading to the declaration of protected areas and/or projects concerning the impact on biodiversity in various areas of the country: Jijiei Valley, Olt Valley, Jiu Valley, Tur River Valley, Nera Valley and Cerna Valley, along Siret-Bărăgan Channel - from Adjud, Mărășești, Focșani, south of Buzău to the confluence with the Ialomița River, Măcin National Park, Piatra Craiului National Park, Călimani National Park, Putna - Vrancea Natural Park, etc. Within these projects, as a principal investigator, dr. Dumitru Murariu coordinated the activity of the team of specialists, from field trips and collecting of specimens and/or data, up to the final drafting of reports. Dr. Dumitru Murariu was the project manager for Romanian nodal center of the BioCASE project, funded by the European Community, which aimed to provide a unitary system of inventory and access to natural science collections in Europe. During 2005–2011, dr. Dumitru Murariu coordinated three research projects, financed by UEFISCDI and the Romanian Academy of Sciences, in the newly established Molecular Biology Department of the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History. Between 2008 and 2010, he coordinated a Romanian-Bulgarian Bilateral Collaboration Project, while

between 2010 and 2012, dr. Dumitru Murariu coordinated the same type of project between Romania and Slovenia.

Director of the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History

Dr. Dumitru Murariu acted as the director of the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History for 26 years (1988–2014), sharing with Grigore Ștefănescu (1867-1893) the second longest directorship of the museum. He had the difficult task to wisely "sail" the museum, as the "flagship" of the Romanian zoological research fleet, though the troublesome time of the political regime change (in December 1989), followed by a reinvention of the museum role in the newly established Romanian society. Dr. Dumitru Murariu has constantly promoted the organizing of activities and services that took into account the interest of the public, such as conferences, publications, guides, temporary exhibitions, etc. As a consequence of this approach, some of the temporary exhibitions in which dr. Dumitru Murariu was directly involved and which had a special scientific and educational value were awarded by the Ministry of Culture the "Mihai Băcescu" Prize (in 2001 and 2002), and the "Grigore Antipa" Prize (in 2003 and 2004). He promoted his ideas not only as the director of the museum, but also as a member, for 12 years, of the National Commission of Museums and Collections of the Ministry of Culture where he contributed to the Norms for re-evaluation of museum collections of natural history.

However, dr. Dumitru Murariu saw clearly that the museum, as designed 100 years in the past (the main exhibition opened in 1908) by Grigore Antipa himself, needed a radical new face. This led to perhaps the most visible of dr. Dumitru Murariu achievements, the complete renewal of the permanent exhibition of the "Grigore Antipa" National Museum of Natural History. Since 2007, dr. Dumitru Murariu coordinated the project *The "Grigore Antipa" Museum reinvented at 100 years*, with financial support from the Ministry of Culture. The project went through a phase of feasibility study and since the winter of 2008 the main work on the exhibition started and ended in September 2011. During this time, the permanent exhibition was completely rebuilt, from the old-fashioned systematic display of specimens, to a modern, mainly dioramic presentation, which displays the Romanian, as well as the world fauna. This was seen as homage to Dr. Grigore Antipa, the founder of the modern museum of natural history in Bucharest, one of the first and main promoters of the dioramas in museums.

After the reopening, the museum attracts an average of 300,000 visitors a year, being one of the most visited museums in the country. Aside from the attractiveness of the new exhibition itself, dr. Dumitru Murariu understood that a modern museum should ascertain and satisfy the expectations of the visitors, their need to rediscover nature and to find in the museum an atmosphere that attracts and pleases at the same time. This would make the visitors return to the museum, not only for the scientific information, but also for recreation and cultural-scientific diversification.

Member in professional societies and editorial boards

Dr. Dumitru Murariu is a life member of the American Society of Mammalogy (since January 1976) and a member of the Commission for the Conservation of Species of the International Society for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). He is also a member of eight Scientific Societies in Romania and since 2000 the president of the Romanian Federation of Chiropterology.

From November 1, 1989 to July 2014 Dumitru Murariu acted as director of the scientific publication Travaux du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", coordinating the publication of 29 volumes. He organized an international exchange program with many library services across the world, which allowed the museum journal to be sent to almost 150 institutes and museums from all continents. In return, the library of the "Grigore Antipa" Museum was enriched with publications, from the most important universities, institutes, biological research stations, and museums of natural sciences in the world. He is member in editorial committees of scientific journals in Romania, Poland and Republic of Moldova (Romanian Fauna Collection, Journal of Biology - Zoology, Studies and Communications - Oltenia Museum – Craiova, Danube Delta Journal - Eco-Museum Research Institute Tulcea, Journal of Wetlands Biodiversity - "Carol I" Museum of Brăila, Scientific Annals of the Danube Delta Institute - Tulcea, Studia Chiropterologica - Institute of Systematics and Animal Evolution – Krakow, Poland and The Bulletin of the Institute of Zoology of the Academy of Sciences of the Moldova Republic).

Recognition

In 2004, dr. Dumitru Murariu was awarded by the Romanian Presidency the "The Cultural Merit" in the rank of Officer, Category E - "National Cultural Heritage". In 2006, he was elected as a correspondent member of the Romanian Academy.

Through his professional achievements and longevity, dr. Dumitru Murariu is a real champion of contemporary museum management and education, management of research, zoological research and science popularization.

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